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Predictive Factors in Fashion Involvement of First Time Mothers Concerning their Newborn's Clothes

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Abstract

Becoming a mother for the first time often correlates with possible selves regarding the new mother's identity and her new role as a mother. The new mother, especially the first time mother, has her aspirations, fears, hopes and ideas of how she will function as a mother and what kind of mother she will be (Bailey, 2001; Dunkel & Kerpelman, 2006).

Clothing can tell others about the status of the individual - his professional personality or his identity. This is how involved the person can be in the consumption of clothing (O'Cass, 2000; Choy, 2008; Hourigan & Bouquore, 2012).

Studeis indicate clothes as well as other goods for the new born function as a status for the new mom positioning heer as a "good mother" Belleau& Nowlin, (2001)., McFatter, (2008).

The things the new mother buys for her new born, the first stroller, first bed, the first clothes, the first nutrition, plays and books all of these are symbols of the mother's function and position(Szmigin & Carrigan, 2006)

This paper treats solo mothers as a differentiated group trying to distinguish between them and partnered mothers as regards fashion involvement

It focuses on independent variables influencing fashion involvement of the first time mothers regarding their newborn's fashion clothes. It compares solo (not in a relationship) mothers and mothers in a cohabiting relationship. The paper concerns consumer involvement of the mother as a construct containing the following four types of involvement: product involvement, advertising involvement, consumption decision involvement, and purchase involvement .

The importance of fashion in the women's life, the significant transition to motherhood as well as the increasing number of single mothers in Israel, encourage the author to explore the behavior and predicted variables influencing the involvement with the newborn's clothes.

The aim of this study was to determine whether there is any the relationship between demographic variables, media usage, personality traits and price perception and the consumer involvement profile of the new mother i.e., the Mother's Consumer Fashion Involvement Profile (MCFIP).

The study focus the influence of age, income, work status, education, media usage, personality traits and price perception of fashion involvement of the new mother regarding baby clothes.

The survey include 247 Jewish new mothers having their first baby, examining the use of the second order factor model of fashion involvement (O'Cass, 2000) that measures the Consumer Involvement Profile (CIP)

Stepwise hierarchic regression was conducted indicating that in solo as well as in partnered mothers media usage, price/quality and public self-consciousness are the main important variables predicting fashion involvement of new and partnered mothers with self-confidence and the baby's age also highly correlated with fashion involvement.

Focusing on new mother consumers can provide better ways to penetrate the market, improving marketing strategies and increasing sales.

Introduction

In Israel, 2008, about 8.3% of the 36,000 births were to solo mothers no partnered mothers.(CBS, 2008, table no. 125).

Out of all solo mothers, about 74% were divorced and 13% widows; the remaining13% includes newborns to solo mothers by choice. Their percentage has increased three-fold during that last 25 years due to the women's independence, their wish to postpone their career or not finding the right husband.

85% of the solo mothers are Jewish, 9% are Arab and the rest are other (<http://www.newfamily.org.il/>).

Based on the National Insurance Institute of Israel law 1992 the single mother is defined as "a household consisting of one parent mother and at least one child"

<http://www.btl.gov.il/search/Results.aspx?k=single%20mother>

The proportion of solo mothers in Israel increased significantly over the years from 4% in the 1970s to 8.8% in 1995 and to 8.9% in 2004 (CBS, 2008). The average age of the first-time mother is 27-30 years of age . The average expenses during the first six months on baby goods is about \$4,500 (excluding the monthly expense for diapers, baby food, pacifiers and other convenience goods.

The major impacts of becoming a mother, using clothes as a status product, Increased in the solo mother sector, as well as increasing the fashion market share for babies led the researcher to the idea to seek the factors influencing solo and partnered mothers in their fashion involvement for baby clothes.

Most of the literature treats solo mothers as a poor segment of the population, focusing on the lack of time and lack of money they have. The fact that there are few, if any, studies focusing on solo mothers as a target market with its own needs; personality traits and price perception motivated the researcher to study it.

Another motivation for this study was the fact that most of the studies focus on medical and other products the mother buys for her new baby, but there are hardly any studies on the factors predicting her involvement and leading to these products.

The fact that the research finds a fashion involvement profile constructed of the four factors, each different in its measure scale and in definition, led the researcher to search for the model affecting each component. If the marketers know what factors predict advertising involvement, product involvement, purchase decision and consumption involvement, they can upgrade their market strategies and meet the new mother's needs.

The research relates to the second order model of Consumer Fashion Involvement Profile (OCass 2000, 2001), containing the second order model of fashion involvement refers to the following aspects: Product involvement, Advertising involvement, Consumption involvement and Purchase decision involvement

All four types create and build the mother's consumer fashion involvement. The results indicate that the main important variables influencing fashion involvement with the product, the advertisement, the purchase decision and consumption process are basically age, having a negative relationship with fashion involvement and a significant positive relationship between media usage, public self-consciousness, price perception (both prestige sensitivity and price /quality) (positive correlation) and fashion involvement both in solo as well as partnered mothers.

Income, marital status and work status have no significant effect on fashion involvement both amongst solo or partnered mothers.

A positive relationship was seen between fashion involvement and media usage as well as between public self-consciousness and fashion non-involvement both amongst solo and in partnered mothers.

Amongst solo mothers; education (negative) and age (negative) can predict only partial involvement. Amongst partnered mothers, self-confidence (positive) can predict partial involvement, age can predict all the involvement types of partnered mothers.

The literature review

Common to all definitions of family is that each member makes decisions about who to include as a member, how to anchor family in the past and future, and distinguishing the family by its unique characteristics (Epp, Price & Price, 2008). These researchers outline three components of family identity:

- Structure - indicates who is in the family and who is outside the family now and in the past. Structure reflects the boundaries between the family members and the hierarchy and the roles of the members, such as divorced or partnered
- Generational orientation – describes links to past and future generations, such as generations who connect through stories, photographs and memories that anchor a family to its past
- Character - daily characteristics of family life regarding activities, values, attitudes, beliefs and other family attributes

In Israel, the birthrate amongst nonreligious families is 2.7 children per family compared to 2.05 children in the USA and 1.9 children in Germany (<http://peakoil.com/forums/is-europe-dying-t59005.html>).

Data regarding different family frameworks for 2008 notes that 5,500 new children are born yearly to single parent families. In the last 25 years the highest percentage of solo mothers aged 35-39 (the average age for solo mothers) has grown to 40% of births, while young women up to the age of 19 account for only 1% of these births(Figure no 1) .

Solo mothers by choice in Israel refers to women who have never been partnered and decided to bring a child into the world, without a marital framework, and usually based on their financial ability and independent sources of income. The usual way to do this is based on the decision to raise the child totally alone, whether through a donation from a sperm bank or through a written agreement with a man who is not interested in sharing the child rearing. His name usually does not appear as the child's father. Similarly, there are women who decide to have a child after getting pregnant without the father's knowledge. His involvement or financial help in raising the child is not demanded. The single parent family law (Israel Government 1992) determines that the concept of the single parent covers a variety of family situations: widows and widowers, divorced males and females, women whose husbands refuse to agree to a divorce, and unmarried mothers.

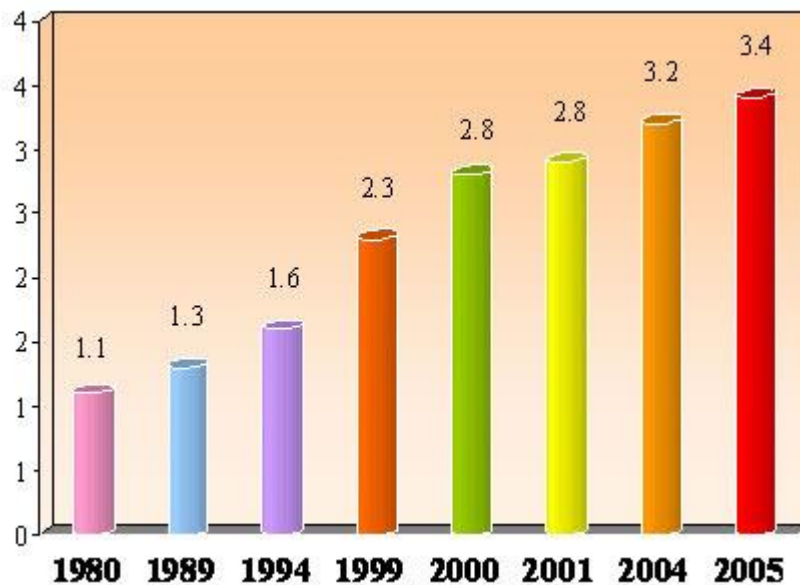


Figure no. 1: Proportion of single mothers by choice in Israel

Source: <http://www.newfamily.org.il/about>

Vehviläinen-Julkunen (1995) describes transitions as an integral part of human development. They have a profound impact and a dramatic affect on the lives of significant others, and major significance for health and welfare.

Life changes such as career change, parenting or losing a close relative are often related to identity transitions and alter the person's feelings, values and images of who he would like to be in the future, the person he wants to become, and the new identity he will adopt after the transition (Ibarra, 2007).

The set of aspirations, fears, ideas, and images the person wishes for himself during and after the transition is called possible selves. Possible selves are the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves that we could become and are afraid of becoming. The possible selves that are hoped for might include the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self, whereas, the created possible selves could be the alone self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, the unemployed self, or the bag lady self" (Markus & Nurius, 1986: 954).

The ideal image of concern to the new mother is her capacity to suffer out of love for another and her way of giving to another. The self-image sees herself here and now rather than related to previous experiments, and the body image theory focuses on the body's ability to accommodate and function with the transition.

Operations are the active processes where there are five operations the new mother has and her successes or failure in them: mimicry, role play, fantasy, introjections/projection and grief. Only after processing these five operations is the new mother's identity achieved (Ibarra 2007; Ledwin & Sevin, 2007).

Being a single parent does not always mean reducing the time spent with children as shown in the study by Mietus and Mauldin (1986) who find that marital status is not considered a factor influencing the time spent with children relative to emotional needs. By interviewing 210 two parent/two children families, and 81 one parent/two children families, these researchers show that single parents do not have less contact with their children, and they spend the same amount of time (45 minutes per day) on emotional issues with their children as two-parent households. Single parents exert weaker controls and make fewer demands than married couples make. These differences are explained by the control and authority that the second parent can bring to the family unit. Single mothers have not socialized through traditional male and paternal behaviors.

Consumption during pregnancy and in the first year of the baby. can be practiced at the following two dimensions (Sevin & Ladwein, 2007). The consumption of clothing for the baby was the role responsibility of the mother, even though in western society the fathers play an equal role in parenting. The idea that the fathers will participate in choosing clothes for the baby was ridiculous from the mother's point of view. As McDonough (1999:228) reports the mother will satisfy herself when she cuts her own consumption in favor for the baby as represented in Western culture, "identifiable by her self-sacrifice her capacity to nurture, and her possession of moral goodness".

Clothes are not the only good reflecting a new identity. Most parents consider a pram to be a necessity for the baby. The pram functions as the second bed for the baby and represents a means of transportation. Because a pram is a visible good it represents the role transition of the mother/father to be and its acquisition symbolizes a sub-process in the parent's new identity (Sevin & Ladwein, 2008).

In Denmark for example, the pram is considered the most important decision new families make and represents the most expensive purchase, influence the status and symbol of the new family (Thomsen & Sorenson 2006; The Voice Group, 2010).

By resisting the consumption of conspicuous symbols of motherhood, women may try to resist the ideologies of motherhood and to keep it a personal, private matter. However, there are other mothers-to-be who indulge in all kinds of consumption related to their future role and are happy to put it on display (Sevon, 2005; Thomsen & Sorenson, 2006).

Based on interviewing first time mothers Thomsen and Sorensen (2006) suggest that the pram is extremely important for the transition to the motherhood identity. The transition process concludes when role performance increases.

Becoming a mother is often connected to psychological and sociological ambivalence (classified as a dilemma in the human condition and often a response of modern life). The new mother finds herself between the ideal of a "good mother" and the cultural beliefs that mothering comes naturally. The maternal ambivalence is between the ideal selves and the "ought" selves for the new mother, between the duty of the mother and her desirable identity as an independent feminist (O'Malley, 2003; Banister & Hogg, 2006).

Another example of ambivalent consumption can be seen regarding cosmetic surgery, when a woman is ambivalent between her desire and aspiration to have cosmetic surgery on the one hand, and on the other Hand Kelly (2001) researched her fear and worry about being stigmatized by it and its outcome (Schouten, 1999). In this way consumption can help the new mother to fill the

gap between the two ambivalent identities, for instance, continuing to buy regular clothes that are not designed for pregnant women.

Consumption can play a positive role in helping the consumer during transition but despite the uncertainty and insecurity during transition, consumers sometimes feel indecisive and uncertain in their consumption decisions.

Consumption has not only positive aspects during the transition but also can complicate the process, making it complex and confused. Uncertainty, resistance, fears, constraints, negative feeling and problematic aspects can accompany the transition and may confuse the consumer (The Voice Group, 2010)

A mode of consumption and identity construction that they use on their own behalf, perhaps as a more hedonic motive, now becomes even more gratifying as it becomes legitimized as vicarious consumption and is enshrouded with the moral goodness of motherhood self-sacrifice. To spend time and effort on the child's clothes is a very visible way to identify the self in the role as a mother. Vicarious consumption is a natural response to this ideal. However, to retain the aura of moral goodness and good taste, it is pertinent that the conspicuous consumption of motherhood is performed in a suitable manner, so that it becomes 'not too conspicuous'.

Symbolic consumption in baby fashion is to have motherhood identity through choosing the right style for the baby, the right brand, appropriate culture and fashion so the clothes show how perfect the mother is (Enrique, Griffin, Carroll, Wu, Cooper, Gebretsadik, & Hartert, 2007). During the consumption decision one major process is the search for information, defined as "the process by which the consumer surveys his or her environment for appropriate data to make a reasonable decision (Solomon et al 2006:265). The individual is to evaluate the information value relative to the cognitive satisfaction and he has to compare the time and effort needed to search this information.

To whom do new mothers listen and with whom do they consult? About 75% of the new mothers of babies aged 0-3 months listen and are mainly

influenced by friends on the forum, listening less to well-baby health clinic experts. Of new mothers who surf the internet, 8.5% of them do not consult a doctor on certain issues, but enter a forum with specialized doctors.

Once, the well-baby clinic nurses would give their opinion, which was considered of ultimate importance. Now the mothers compare the comments and advice of these nurses with their friends' advice, who they consider more opinion-leaders, up-to-date and authoritative than those nurses who are considered old-fashioned, as these mothers surf and have other sources of information.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2006:286) observe, "Involvement is a heightened state of awareness that motivates consumers to seek out, attend to, and think about product information prior to purchase." It is the perceived interest and importance that a consumer attaches to the acquisition and consumption of a product/service offering.

Involvement creates within consumers an urge to look for and think about the product/service category and the varying options before making decisions on brand preferences and the final act of purchase. Consumer involvement explains the differences in the mental and physical effort by the consumer, while decision-making depends on the differentiation between alternatives, the product's complexity, the personal needs and motives regardless of the price of the product or the information advertized (Zaichkowsky, 1985: Sridhar, 2007).

Another definition of involvement is Zaichkowsky (1985: 342) "A person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests". This definition notes that different involvement levels may lead to different consumer responses.

Fashion and clothing dressing is a collective behavior of social conformity according to the individual's self-image. Clothing reflects the individual personality, helps to enhance personal characteristics, improves self-esteem and expresses high self-esteem (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004).

Fashion clothing is considered important in communicating a sense of well-being, is consumed publicly and is considered important in communicating a

sense of well-being. Clothing communicates a range of meanings and helps to enhance personal characteristics of the individual.

As involvement relates to the activities, motivation and interests evoked by stimulus or situational (O'Cass, 2004), fashion clothing has been cited as a product category likely to induce high involvement and can be defined as the perceived personal relevance or interest by the consumer regarding fashion clothing (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 2005). The more attention the consumer has towards clothing, his involvement to the product increases.

Fashion involvement implies that people often have a great impact on fashion style and emphasize their clothing. High fashion involvement indicates that the consumers are important to fashion researchers and marketers, and are highly motivated to devote time and attention to fashion. For them, fashion clothing is most symbolic in terms of status and importance of the consumer (Tigert, Ring and King 1976; Goldsmith, Moore & Beaudoin, 1999; , Belleau et al., 2008). Clothing can fulfill a number of functions beyond mere functional performance, including warmth or protection. Clothing can tell others about the status of the individual - his professional personality or his identity. This is how involved the person can be in the consumption of clothing (O'Cass, 2000; Choy and OC ass, 2008; Hourigan & Bouquore, 2012).

A second-order construct (Figure no. 2) of consumer involvement is a composition of the four first order constructs, representing basic types related to the consumer's environment (O'Cass, 2000). The construct contains four types of fashion involvement (Zaichkowsky, 1986; O'Cass, 2000, O'Cass & Choy, 2008).

- Product involvement reflects recognition that a particular product category may be more or less central to people's lives, their sense of identity and their relationship with the rest of the world (Zaichkowsky, 1985)
- Advertising involvement refer to the ways the individual experiences and is influenced by the mass media
- Consumption involvement refers to the procedure itself, information collection, adopting new brands, information evaluation, the number of stores been visited etc,

- Purchase decision involvement refers to the self-relevance of the individual's purchasing activities. Involvement with purchase decisions is conceptualized as a behavior change in decision strategy and the resulting choice that occurs only when the consumer sees the purchase or consumption situation as personally relevant or important.

The figure below represents the second order factor model of consumer involvement (the relationship between the four types of involvement) (O'Cass, 2000).

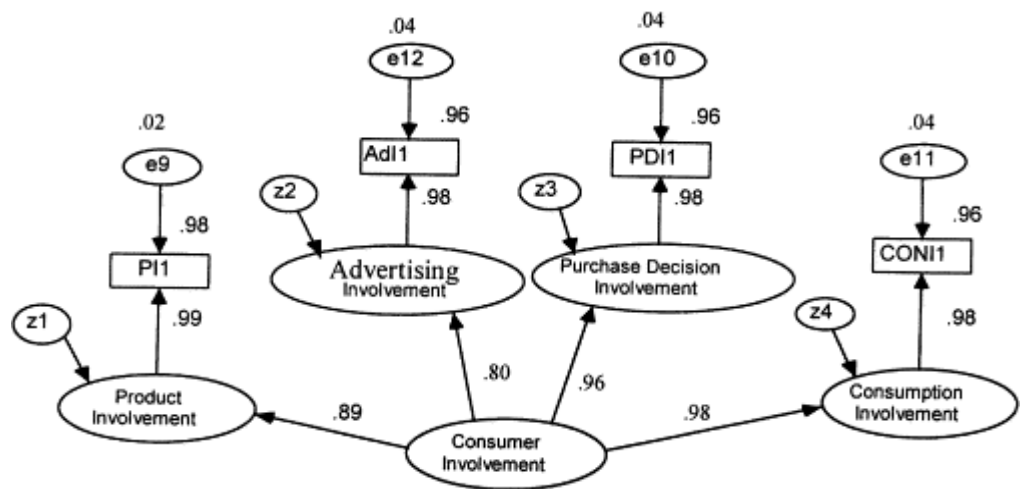


Figure no 2: The second order factor model of consumer involvement (the relationship between the four types of involvement)

Source: O'Cass (2000).

The literature sees independent variables as predicting the fashion involvement in either adult or young males and females. Among the factors examined were demographic variables including age, gender, income, education and work status of the consumer. Some studies show a positive relationship with education (Khare & Rakesh, 2010) while some show a negative relationship with fashion involvement (McFatter, 2005).

The studies support age as having a negative relationship with involvement (Sridhar, 2007; Hochgraeffe, Faulk & Vieregge, 2009). Income has a positive relationship with involvement

Other variables were: 1) Media usage= the channels, time and effort the consumer invests 2) Personality traits meaning the self-confidence the person has and his public self-awareness of fashion.

Another relationship was tested between fashion involvement and the consumer's price perception, referring to his insight and sensitivity to the product price and evaluation the quality of the product base on his price (Prendergast & Wong, 2003; Story, Davies & Farrell, 2005; Sridhar, 2007, McFatter 2005; O'Cass, 2004).

Development of the research methodology: From rational to the model

Although many studies have been conducted on consumer fashion involvement, limited studies focus on the forces increasing or decreasing each type of fashion involvement. Few deal with the consumer's profile as a construct contained within the four different types of involvement (to the product, advertising, purchase decision and to the consumption procedure). It will be remarkable to find what factors relate to each type.

Price perception, personality traits, media usage, and demographic variables were tested regarding fashion involvement but not many study the relationship between each involvement type.

The study has the following questions:

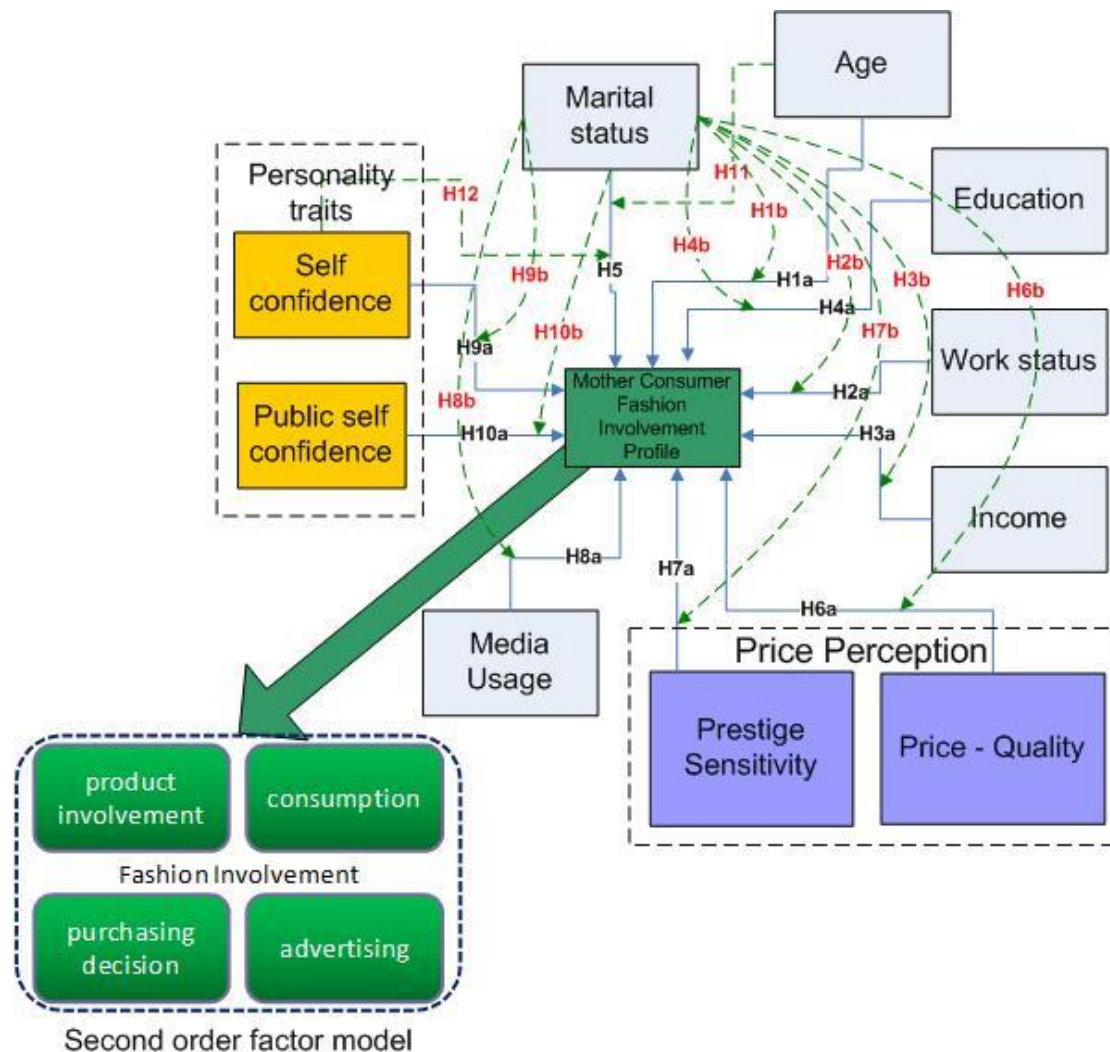
1. What the significant factors are influencing the new mother's consumer fashion involvement profile vis-à-vis her newborn's clothes?
2. Is there a difference in consumer involvement of the new mothers between solo and partnered mothers?
3. Do the independent variables have the same effect on each type of involvement (product involvement, advertising involvement, purchase decision, and consumption involvement)?

The research objective was to add knowledge and information in the field of consumer behavior when the assumption is that independent variables influence and predict the consumer's fashion involvement. The research focuses on the transition to motherhood for the first time and is supposed to

add practical knowledge regarding the baby's clothes and dressing amongst solo and partnered first time mothers.

It will be valuable to the marketers to find out what factors influence each type, what they should use within the media in order to increase the advertising involvement or what price or prestige they should give the baby's fashion clothes in order to improve the new mother's product involvement. Thus there are factors having a positive or negative influence on each of the four types or dimensions of the Consumer Fashion Involvement Profile (CFIP) as presented in the following model.

The Research Model



This model represents the independent variables including demographic variables, personality traits, price perception , media usage by the new mother and their relationship with the fashion involvement for her newborn 's clothes. The model is based on the fact that fashion involvement of the new mother is a construct base on the literature using the four following dimensions: advertising involvement, product involvement, purchase decision involvement and consumption involvement as presented by O'Cass (2000) regarding the second order factor model of consumer fashion involvement .

The research hypotheses

The research hypotheses are presented below and thereafter analyzed individually.

- **Hypothesis 1a** :A negative relationship will be found between age of the mother and her fashion involvement regarding baby's clothes .Therefore the younger the new mother is, the higher fashion involvement in baby's clothing she will have and vice versa.
- **Hypothesis 1b: Marital** status moderates the relationship between age and fashion involvement of the new mother so a different relationship will be found between fashion involvement and age base on marital status of the new mother
- **Hypothesis 2a** : A difference in each type of the fashion involvement of the first time mothers regarding her baby's clothes will be found according to their work status. Employed new mothers will have higher fashion involvement in baby's clothing in comparison to unemployed new mothers.
- **Hypothesis 2 b:** Marital status moderates the relationship between work status and fashion involvement of the new mother for her baby's clothes so a different relationship will be found between work status and fashion involvement base on the marital status of the new mother
- **Hypothesis 3a:** A positive relationship will be found between the mother's income and her fashion involvement for baby clothes. The higher the new mother's income, the more fashion involved she will be in the baby's clothing and vice versa.
- **Hypothesis 3b:** Marital status moderates the relationship between income and fashion involvement of the new mother regarding baby's clothes, so a

different relationship will be found between income and fashion involvement base on the marital status of the new mother

- **Hypothesis 4a:** A positive relationship will be found between education and fashion involvement of the new mother regarding her baby's clothes. The higher the new mother's education, the more fashion involved she will be in the baby's clothing and vice versa.
- **Hypothesis 4b:** Marital status moderates the relationship between education and fashion involvement., so a different relationship will be found between education of the mother and fashion involvement base on the marital status of the new mother
- **Hypothesis 5:** A difference in fashion involvement to baby's clothes will be found according to mother's marital status. Thus partnered new mothers will have higher fashion involvement in baby clothing in comparison to solo new mothers.
- **Hypothesis 6a:** A positive relationship will be found between price /quality of the new mother's and fashion involvement for baby clothes. Thus the higher the fashion involvement of the new mother, the higher the price perception purchases will be and vice versa.
- **Hypothesis 6b** Marital status moderates the relationship between price/quality and fashion involvement of the new mother so a different relationship will be found between price /qualtiy and fashion involvement base on the marital status of the new mother
- **Hypothesis 7a:** A positive relationship will be found between prestige sensitivity of the new mother and fashion involvement for baby clothes Thus the higher the new mother's fashion involvement, the higher the price prestige will be found and vice versa.
- **Hypothesis 7b** Marital status moderates the relationship between prestige sensitivity of the new mother and fashion involvement of the new mother. so a different relationship will be found between price prestige and fashion involvement base on the marital status of the new mother
- **Hypothesis 8a:** A positive relationship will be found between media usage of the new mother and fashion involvement for baby's clothes. Thus the

higher the fashion involvement of the new mother, the more information the mother will use and vice versa.

- **Hypothesis 8b:** Marital status moderates the relationship between media usage and fashion involvement of the new mother. so a different relationship will be found between media usage of the new mother and fashion involvement base on the marital status of the new mother
- **Hypothesis 9a:** A positive relationship will be found between self-confidence of the new mother and fashion involvement for baby clothes Thus the higher the new mother's self-confidence, the more fashion involved she will be and vice versa.
- **Hypothesis 9b:** Marital status moderates the relationship between self-confidence of the new mother and fashion involvement. so a different relationship will be found between self-confidence and fashion involvement base on the marital status of the new mother
- **Hypothesis 10 a:** A positive relationship will be found between public self-consciousness of the new mother and fashion involvement for baby's clothes. Thus the higher the new mother's public self-consciousness the new mother, the higher her fashion involvement and vice versa.
- **Hypothesis 10b:** Marital status moderates the relationship between public self-consciousness of the new mother and fashion involvement so a different relationship will be found between public self-consciousness and fashion involvement base on the marital status of the new mother
- **Hypothesis 11.** The new mother's age moderates the relationship between marital status and fashion involvement for baby clothes. .so a different relationship will be found between marital status and fashion involvement base on the new m other's age
- **Hypothesis 12:** The new mother's self-confidence moderates the relationship between marital status and fashion involvement for baby clothes so a different relationship will be found between marital status and fashion involvement base on the new mother's self confidence

The sample and research process

In order to determine a credible and reliable study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hirschman, 1986) the sample included 247 first time Jewish women, of whom 141 were partnered having a relationship and 106 are solo new mothers. In both samples the baby's age was 0-24 months.

This study focused on solo new mothers including single mothers, widows or divorced mothers regardless of the reason they are alone. Even so, this researcher presumes that only a few mothers, if any, will divorce while becoming a mother, hence she expects the sample to include single or widowed new mothers only.

The research focused on new mothers having given birth in the two years prior to this study. The samples were conducted only among non-religious Jewish mothers because of the differentiation between this segment and the Arab or religious mothers.

In order to create a reliable and dependable study that meets all the required and registered criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hirschman, 1986), questions were reduced to assure that was the interviewee's firstborn baby, aged up to 24 months.

The sources for the data sample were the Family Health Care Center for Mother and Infant in each city in Israel, that help and assist mothers just after giving birth.

Before or after the medical examination (usually before) the researcher asked the mother's agreement to answer the questionnaire and gave it to mothers who were willing to cooperate. Approximately 85% of the new mothers were willing to answer the personal questionnaire which took about 25 minutes. The researcher considers this a high rate of response, due especially to the fact that they had a new baby to take care of.

The questionnaire was developed through reviewing the existing measures for the present research. Instead of seeing the profile as being constituted by one or more antecedents, fashion involvement of the new mother profile (Mother Consumer Fashion Involvement Profile (MCFIP) was measured and designed

specifically to underpin the four forms proposed, including product involvement, advertising involvement, purchase decision involvement, and consumption involvement.

The fashion involvement profile as well as each of the five types were measured using a five-point scale for a single item to measure the insolvent's dimension, with 1 = least fashion involvement and 5 = highest fashion involvement. Reliability analysis produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.76, indicating high intra-correlations among the five items used to measure fashion involvement (Xie 2000).

The respondents were asked relate their marital status, their price perception, personality traits, media usage and demographic variables. The results were tested using Spearman correlation, Pearson correlation, MANOVA test and Stepwise hierarchic regression

The research variables

The current study is a quantitative study designed to explore the relationship between dependent and independent variables

Independent variables

1. Household Income: The researcher wanted to test if the monthly average income of the mother is higher, similar to or lower than the typical income of families in Israel. By using the income variable she could attain the mother's total monthly income from her work from capital, pensions, social insurance funds and from allowances and assistance including the partner's income if there was such. The average net money income in Israel 2012 is about 12,939 NIS (equal to US \$4000) per household (CBS 2012, table no. 5.28) where:

- A family with a net monthly income of less than 12,939 NIS is considered a low income
- A family with a net monthly Income of more than 12,939 NIS is considered a higher income than average.

The sources for net income can be from work, from capital, from pensions, social insurance funds and from allowances and assistance

(http://www.cbs.gov.il/shnaton63/st05_28x.pdf)

2. Age: The respondents in this study were aged 18-43 and were divided into three categories:

- 1) Aged 18-24
- 2) Aged 25- 34
- 3) Aged 35-43

The median category was around 30 years of age.

3. Education: The mothers' education was between 10 years of schooling through to a third degree. In Israel, by law people must complete 12 years of high school sponsored by the government. Even though about 15% do not finish high school, 10 -12 years of schooling are considered low education (CBS, 2004, table no. 2 (A1.2a).

After completing compulsory military service at the age of 21, the young adult may continue studying at university for academic degrees. Another choice of high education can refer to studying in a professional college for high-education equal to a university degree.

4. Work Status: The mothers were divided into three categories of work status based on the Israeli Ministry of Industry of Trade and Labor law (1993). The first category refers to mothers working full time, i.e. between 30-40 hours a week or 150- 200 hours a month. The second category is part time work of between 10-30 hours a week (i.e.50-150 hours a month). The third category includes mothers with no job or working randomly for a maximum 10 hours a week

5. Price perceptions: Consumer perceptions of price/quality and prestige were measured. Two validated indices, developed by Lichtenstein, Ridgway, and Netermeyer (1993) were used to measure price/quality and sensitivity to prestige.

Since price perception contain both price quality and price prestige, each was measured with different items:

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- The price perception price/ quality contain four items measuring the new mother's appreciation for price as predicting quality.
- The price perception prestige sensitivity contains eight items measuring the new mother' price prestige and her values and beliefs related to high priced products.

Both price perceptions' variables were measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree (Xu, 2000). Item responses in each index were summed to create two scores; the price/quality score and the prestige sensitivity score.

6. Media usage: The media usage contains seven items representing the new mother's exposure to mass media, internet, blogs etc.

Based on Verbeke and Vackier (2004) the decision making was scored on four items with 5 –point scales ranging from “very few” to “a lot of” for both spending time, , using information media usage sources, consulting with others, and impacts from mass and personal information. The sources included commercial sources (internet, television radio, magazines, newspapers, advertising and government information) and personal sources (professional, friends' and relative's opinions). The purchasing behavior was relevant to socio-demographic variables including age, income, education and marital status of the new mother.

Participants were asked to indicate their usage of fashion information including magazines, TV shows, movies, catalogs, celebrities, and the Internet. Seven items measuring this information summed to construct the media usage score. Each item was measured on a five-point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

7. Personality traits: The personality traits included in the analyses are the consumer's self-confidence and public self-consciousness.

Since personality traits contain self confidence and public self consciousness each was measured using different items:

- The new mother's self-confidence represents her secure assurance, as a mother, and was measured using six items.

- The public self-consciousness represents her awareness and the good impression the new mother wish to make and includes seven items.

Wells and Tigert (1971) confirm the self-confidence index to measure consumers' perceptions of themselves as confident leaders. This study used a seven-item index. Each item was measured on a seven-point scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree (Xu, 2000; Angelo, 2010). One item was reverse coded to follow the same order. Feningstein, Scheier, and Buss's (1975) index was used to measure public self-consciousness. The seven-point, Likert-type scale measured the degree to which a person expresses an awareness of self as a social object with an effect on others. Each item in both scales was summed to produce two personality totals: self-confidence score and public self-consciousness.

Dependent variables

Mother's Consumer Fashion involvement Profile (MCFI)containing the following four involvement types or dimensions:

1. Product involvement scale contains nine items that represent the degree the consumer is involved in the product of fashion clothing
2. Purchase decision Involvement construct contains ten items that represent the degree the consumer is involved in the purchase decision of fashion clothing.
3. Consumption involvement dimension contains three items that represent the degree the consumer is involved in the consumption of, or wears, fashion clothing.
4. Advertising involvement dimension contains eight items representing the degree the consumer is involved in advertising communications concerning fashion clothing.

For each involvement type the researcher used the seven-point Likert scale 1= extremely disagree up to 7= extremely agree (Verbeke & Vackier, 2004; Hye-Shin, 2005)

The research findings

The results show the different influence of the independent variable on the types of involvement.

Negative relationship

- A negative relationship between the **age** of the new mothers and fashion involvement type (beside product involvement having no relationship with age)
- A negative relationship between **education** and fashion involvement's dimensions (product involvement. Purchase decision and consumer involvement)

Positive relationship

- A positive relationship was seen between **personality traits and fashion involvement**, significant in partnered mothers.
- A positive relationship between **media usage** and all types of fashion involvement
- A positive relationship between price **perception** and fashion involvement , significant in solo mothers.

No significant relationship

- No significant relationship was seen **between income** and fashion involvement or in the **working status** of the new mother and her involvement to the newborn's clothes

Moderate variables: Marital status moderates the relationship as follows:

In partnered mothers the relationship between the following independent variables are stronger compared to solo mothers:

- Age and all involvement dimension (except product involvement)
- Self-confidence and purchase decision involvement

In solo mothers the relationship between the following independent variables is stronger compared to partnered mothers:

- Education and fashion involvement .fashion involvement.

The regression analyses supports the results indicating that amongst solo as well as in partnered mothers' media usage, price/quality and public self-consciousness are the main important variables predicting fashion involvement of the new and the partnered mothers.

In partnered mothers, self-confidence and the baby's age were also high correlated with fashion involvement.

The research field combined consumer behavior and psychology regarding the role of first time motherhood.

Conclusions and implications of the study

The significant difference lies in self-confidence and the age of the mother with stronger influence amongst partnered mothers than in solo mothers. Amongst solo mothers education and prestige sensitivity have the most interaction with involvement.

The results shows that solo and partnered mothers having high involvement are less cost conscious, spend much more time shopping and have more knowledge. They are more interested and are less traditional. Both new solo or partnered mothers with a high price perception, high usage of media, are young, aware, and conscious of the baby's dressing probably have high involvement and will act as fashion leaders for baby clothes.

Baby clothes is a subject that is hard to evaluate from the price perspective, especially as regards clothes for baby girls, as it is hard to face the temptations to dress them in diverse effects. The average expenditure by parents on clothing during the first year is between \$750-1000 (<http://www.1mother.net>).

The baby clothing market grows rapidly (3 billion NIS per year). In view of the expenditure on baby clothes it is acceptable for the marketers to find some

new methods and strategies for entering that sector. High or low involvement influences the decision making process, its stages and information search, and the evaluation process is longer, actively moving through the internal route and using cognitive factors.

The marketers can apply each segment with a different focus: in the solo mothers they can emphasize the positioning and image of the product controlling the mother's prestige sensitivity and her involvement. In partnered mothers the marketers can focus on the self-confidence of the new mothers controlling her fashion involvement

In both segments the marketers should advertise and acknowledge new mothers through magazines, internet and television using passive media focusing in the price quality of the baby's clothes.

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Fashion leaders affect the market and have great power to introduce a new product to the market. Knowing that can help the marketers to target this mother's sector by developing gender-specific advertising and marketing strategies.

Based on this study, new mothers are interested in a profit valuable market because they are uncertain and insecure, and using clothes as status and positioning their being "good mothers".

Summary

This study explores consumer vulnerability and the role of fashion involvement by focusing on new mothers. Developing the consumer involvement by using the model of O'Cass (2000), the author considers how demographic variables, media usage, price perception and personality traits of the new mothers all contribute to the fashion involvement for her newborn's clothes comparing solo and partnered mothers.

It focused on the new mothers in their transition to motherhood for the first time and examines the predictable variables that are correlated to the mother's involvement in consumption behavior of symbolic products for her first child.

Understanding the needs, factors and expectable needs regarding the mother's decision for her baby may help the marketers to improve their skills and utilities to penetrate the baby clothing market.

Satisfying the mother's new selves helps her to adjust to her new role and to realize her new identity as a "good mother".

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